

# **West Plant Materials Workshop**

## **Executive Summary**

The West Plant Materials Program held a three day workshop in Portland, Oregon, March 21-23, 2006. Ron Alvarado, Assistant State Conservationist, acting for Bob Graham, State Conservationist, Portland, Oregon, welcomed the workshop participants and challenged the program to continue providing technology and training that facilitates effective implementation of voluntary conservation programs. Bruce Newton, Director, West National Technology Support Center (WNTSC), Portland, Oregon, recognized the excellent work that the program has been doing and also challenged plant materials staff to address emerging needs and to explore new opportunities for the role of plants in bioenergy, air quality, invasive species control, and threatened and endangered species. Bruce also described the technology support role of the WNTSC and how technical consortia, such as the Plant Materials program interact in that process. John Englert, for Robert Escherman, National Program Leader for Plant Materials, Washington, D.C., gave an update on activities surrounding the national plant materials program, participation in NRCS Boot Camp training, and current as well as future funding. It was also announced that the newest PMC located at Fallon, Nevada had filled both the Manager and Farm Technician position.

State Resource Conservationists Jeff Burwell, Frank Easter, Diane Holcomb, Eric Banks of Lakewood, Colorado, Spokane, Washington, Davis, California, and Phoenix, Arizona respectively, gave their perspective on the role of the plant materials program in conservation planning and Farm Implementation.

Plant Material Center Managers and Specialists gave oral presentations on present and future plant collections, initial evaluation plantings and advanced evaluation plantings and technology being developed within geographic areas serviced by the PMCs in Tucson, Arizona, Los Lunas, New Mexico, Lockeford, California, Meeker, Colorado, Corvallis, Oregon, Pullman, Washington, Aberdeen, Idaho, Bridger, Montana, Palmer, Alaska, Hoolehua, Hawaii, and Fallon, Nevada.

Roger Borine, State Habitat Specialist, Redmond, Oregon presented plant related technology gaps that the plant materials program could be incorporating into study plans. The technology gaps had been identified by wildlife biologists throughout the west specifically for this workshop. He challenged the program to improve the effectiveness of transferring new plant materials developed technology.

Bill Kuenstler, Agronomist, Fort Worth, Texas, challenged the plant materials program to utilize their expertise and knowledge of plants for phytoremediation of contaminated sites. Bill proposed development of a phytoremediation FOTG Standard with plant materials having responsibility for its maintenance. He also discussed the Kansas State University, phytoremediation database being developed in cooperation with the NRCS Plant Data Center that could be linked to a phytoremediation practice standard. The

database would serve a repository for plant information developed by the plant material experts for phytoremediation.

Stefanie Aschmann, Leader Bioenergy Development Team, WNTSC, Portland, Oregon provided a primer on energy, discussed current activities of the WNTSC energy team, and identified technology needs that the PM program could help meet. Identified technology needs included determining energy potential of plant materials useful in creating sustainable (natural resource) energy production systems.

Greg Zwicke, Air Quality Engineer, WNTSC, Portland, Oregon provided an overview of current activities of the air quality team and facilitated a discussion regarding plant material needs. Identified items included documenting above and below ground carbon sequestration potential of various plants, evaluating and selecting plants with low VOC production for urban use in EPA air quality non-attainment areas, and plants with potential to remove air pollutants such as ammonia.

Robert Westover, National Plant Materials Program Public Affairs Specialist, gave helpful tips for PMCs interested in marketing PMC products. John Englert, PMC Manager, Beltsville, Maryland, discussed the significance of the POMS (Plant materials Operations and Management System) database and expanding future development of the database to effectively and efficiently track progress of the plant materials program.

Scott Lambert, National Seed Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Boise, Idaho discussed the types of plants desired by BLM in its fire restoration activities. BLM is the largest user of NRCS plant products purchasing \$2-4 million dollars worth of seed annually. Due to genetic integrity and ecological concerns plants with minimal genetic manipulation and from within the proposed ecoregion of use are desired.

Russ Haas, NRCS Revegetation Technical Advisor to the National Park Service (NPS), Bismarck, North Dakota provided an overview of NRCS plant and seed increase activities for NPS. Russ indicated there is continuing support, and desire to expand, the \$750,000 annual reimbursement to NRCS PMCs.

Bill Kuenstler, Agronomist, CNTSC, explained the importance of specific plant parameters PMCs need to focus on during evaluation to insure that recommended products meet CPPE requirements identified in the FOTG conservation Standard

Jim Briggs, Plant Materials Specialist, WNTSC, gave a presentation on the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and expected Plant Materials involvement in the upcoming CSP research enhancements. He led a group discussion which identified various long and short term needs to insure successful implementation of the upcoming enhancements. Jim then led a discussion on various approaches to improve PM products and the efficiency of their development.

Joel Douglas, Plant Materials Specialist, CNTSC provided training on use of the newly acquired and distributed “Statistix – 8” statistical analysis software. Joel also reviewed and answered questions regarding the user guide he developed for plant materials staff.

Breakout sessions, facilitated by Ramona Garner and Bruce Munda from the Tucson PMC, by Plant Materials staff resulted in action items that promoted cooperative PMC studies, sharing ideas and successes for greater operation efficiency, better communication between PMCs and PMSs, and guidance on plant selection and product marketing.